Esoteric Facts of CHRISTIANITY

ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY

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BY

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Esoteric Facts *of* CHRISTIANITY

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THE MAJESTY OF PAIN
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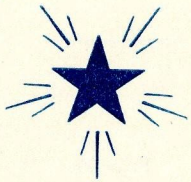
The people of America are ready for Christ—the true Christ—but they wish that Christ unchurched, unshackled and unconfined, a living symbol of the Christ potential in the human heart



Esoteric Facts of Christianity

CHAPTER I.

Why Christianity Fails

URING the last fifty years a concerted and determined effort has been made by scientific and philosophical schools to undermine the foundations of the Christian faith. A great array of critical talent has been marshalled and employed to this end. If we were to believe them and their findings, our faith would soon ebb away in a tide of doubt. These critics contend that no such man as Jesus Christ lived during the reign of Herod the King; that St. Paul was a wild visionary, afflicted with epilepsy, which infirmity was responsible for his vision near the gates of Damascus at the time of his remarkable conversion; that the Christian teachings are but weak parodies of age old heathen myths.

Let it be understood that the student of the Ancient Wisdom, commonly known as Theosophy, does not approach the subject of Christianity with the torch of the iconoclast. We challenge, truly, but we do not criticise or condemn, but ever strive to synthesize, harmonize and explain. We maintain that there are great and beautiful truths hidden under the sometimes

repellent doctrines of the Church, truths so broad, so cosmic and significant in character that when understood a great flood of light is thrown upon modern theology. We endeavor, by a careful, historical, and occult analysis of the Christian scriptures, to bring forth those hidden jewels of truth that have been long covered with the rubbish of centuries.

Sometimes we are criticised for trying to explain Christianity to its followers. "Why don't you teach Theosopy and let us alone?" some inquire. Such an inquiry betrays a misunderstanding of the function and purpose of the Theosophical Society. We are not devoted to the presentation of new and unique spiritual and philosophical facts any more than to the representation of old facts in new and illuminated aspects. The Theosophical Society is composed of a body of earnest students, living all over the world, who are united in a single purpose—the discovery of truth wherever it may be found. They have no slavish regard for externals, but ever strive for that which lies at the heart of things. These students believe that each religion in the world has its purpose and cannot be considered inferior to another. Wherever and among whatever nations a religion may be found, we see in that teaching the best means of inspiration for that nation and people. We do not, therefore, go about seeking to uproot and destroy the beliefs of others, for in that act we would leave them bereft of their spiritual

food and be without the power to nourish them with our own. Knowing that each religion has been given by the Supermen of the ages, who have known the needs of each nation to which it has been given, we are content to seek and find in that religion the shining truths that there lie hidden, and these we reveal in the teaching of Theosophy. You will thus see that Theosophy draws its inspiration from all sacred sources; drinks at all wells of wisdom. Many followers of Christianity, who have with earnest minds approached its teaching only to be repelled by the devitalized remnants found within the Church, have at last come into the Theosophical Society only to find there the same teachings glorified by the radiance of the mysteries so long hidden. Such are then eager to return to their own faith to reinspire and reinvigorate it, and this is well, for Christianity is well suited to the Western mind. If America knew and understood the real teaching that Christ gave, every church in our land would be packed from altar to vestibule with the most intelligent of our people. Instead of this condition, we find in many orthodox churches meagre attendance and scantier interest. Why is this? Why do the most progressive and thoughtful of our people turn away from the Church with a sense of vague distress and rebellion?

Why does Christianity not restrain the nations from rushing into war and back to barbarism? Why

are there three and a half millions of people in the city of New York alone who have no church affiliation? Why, may we ask, does not the working man go to church? Do you know that the American laboring man is entirely out of touch with Christianity? Indeed, in some respects he is hostile to its influence. A writer of great prominence recently declared that the working man looks with actual suspicion upon ecclesiastical authority of all kinds, regarding all religious institutions as veiled agents of social enslavement, designed and existing solely to keep the worker in a state of submissive subjection. "The clergy dine with the rich and preach at the poor," one says. Another declares, "The laboring man hates the very shadow the church spire casts across his path." However strained and exaggerated these strictures may appear, the important thing to know is that such a sentiment exists in wholesale and widespread form.

Many students of social reform insist that it is just as well for people to throw aside religious domination and live free and untrammeled; that, after all, religion is largely cant and hypocrisy. But all true-hearted men and women know that religion is the most fundamental of all human needs. The ethical and moral teachings we have received from our great spiritual guides, prophets, and saviors, form the basis of our national consciousness, and continually shape and reshape the weave of our social imagination.

Any man or nation devoid of religion is devoid of ideals, and a man or nation without an ideal is in peril. And America's future is fraught with peril for this reason. In the days to come great changes and readjustments in our economic and industrial system are sure to occur. We are on the threshold of a great economic convulsion which will be precipitated by the cessation of the world war. At that time great wisdom and self-restraint will be needed to guide us through that wilderness of conflict. The most important factor in that conflict will be the toiler. If he be without a religion and without the ideal of Brotherhood, which is all that religion means; if he be fed on class hatred and animosities, he will be guided in that revolution by instinct; and when great masses of men, acting in violent concert, are ruled by instinct, then God save us!

We therefore labor for the restoration of the hidden truths of Christianity, that through the beauty and joy there hidden, we may beguile men from their baser instincts and stem the tide of materialism.

Again, we ask, Why is Christian Science? Why does it flourish with such startling vigor? Why does this heterodox cult continue to drain the life blood of the Church? Why have two hundred and fifty thousand of the most intelligent devotees and thoughtful of our church members gone over, body and soul, to Christian Science during the last few years? Why?

Because Christian Science has embodied in its teachings one of the happiest and most satisfying of Christ's messages, one of the messages Christianity has neglected and tacitly repudiated.

There would be no need for Christian Science, for New Thought, for Spiritualism or for Theosophy if the churches of the West would teach Christianity.

What is Christian Science? It is a declaration of independence against the corroding doctrines of sin, sorrow and disease as necessary elements in religious life. Christian Science asserts that man has the Christ-nature resident potential in the heart; that through the gateways of realization and self-discovery he may find that Christ-self, and in it, the healing waters of life; that once this omnipotent mind of the over-soul is contacted, a mighty rhythm, harmonious and all-encompassing, wells upward and outward, sweeping into harmony and health all things and persons it embraces; that disease and sin under its ministration speedily fade away into the real of the not-self, the not-Christ.

Well, this is clearly what Christ taught. He enjoined his disciples to "Go, preach, saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give." He said that all others who believed on Him and served in His name might do healing miracles. And we know from the record left

us in the New Testament that the apostles did heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out devils, and they acquired the power from within, in Christ's Name, exercising through this power that peaceful and joyous dominion over nature that He so gracefully exemplified. Even unworthy Peter, after the Pentecostal flame had lit the fire of service in his own heart, was able to raise one who had seemingly passed the portals of death.

Is it any wonder that the life blood of the Church is being drained into the arteries of Christian Science when so fundamental and animating a doctrine as this is ignored?

And the teachings of Spiritualism are no less orthdox. What are the elements of Spiritualism against which Christianity may appeal?

When all prejudice is laid aside, we find that Spiritualism is a protest against the accepted Christian teaching that between this world and the after world stretches an impassable gulf. At death we pass over this gulf on an ethereal bridge. At the other end the passage is sealed and no one may ever return. Our loved ones who have crossed that gulf have gone forever beyond communication; no consoling message of joy and immortality can be wafted across that dark and forbidding abyss.

Spiritualism teaches that this impassable chasm is non-existent, a sheer figment conjured from human

fears; that the supposed gulf is really only a thin veil that dimly separates the living and the dead; that this veil may be lifted or brushed aside, and the living and the dead may once more mingle in friendly intercourse; that the angels and teachers from the invisible world are in constant and conscious touch with the denizens of earth, helping, stimulating and guiding them into a larger measure of life.

Is this not scriptural doctrine? Is not the Bible full of spiritistic teaching? The Old Testament is one long record of angelic appearances, visitations from the dead, clairvoyant experiences, dreams and visions, evidencing a constant and enduring interaction and correlation of the two planes of being occupied by the living and the living-dead.

In the second book of Kings we have a most striking illustration of the parallel between Spiritualism and Biblical teaching. King Saul, in great anxiety over the fate of his kingdom, sought out "a woman with a familiar spirit," the "Witch of Endor." Those in touch with spiritualistic terms recognize at once that a woman with a familiar spirit is neither more nor less than a medium who has a guide who acts as intermediary between the medium and the manifesting spirit. King Saul visited this woman and induced her to go into a trance and gain speech with Samuel the Prophet, who had been sometime dead. Her efforts were superlatively successful, for not only did

she contact Samuel through the veil, but succeeded in bringing him to King Saul, where he manifested himself visibly to the king and gave him the discomforting message that on the morrow he and his sons would be slain and his kingdom rent asunder.

The appearance of the handwriting on the palace walls of King Belshazzar is one of the most common phenomenon in modern spiritualistic circles.

In the New Testament the disciples of the Christ and His followers were led in their work and ministry to a great extent by messages received in the most accepted spiritualistic fashion. The Spiritualists are, aside from Biblical evidence, quite right in their assertion that the dead DO live and may return to us. In this respect we have the most convincing testimony of some scientists of eminence in the modern world. A few years ago Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes and Alfred Wallace (collaborator with Darwin), all men of highest scientific standing, noting the prevalence of spiritualistic belief and regarding its spread as another evidence of the ease with which untrained minds accept baseless delusion, determined to probe and expose its fallacies, employing the scientific methods of research. The record of their experiments has been published, so it only remains to be said that, after a number of years of rigid and painstaking investigation, under the severest scientific con-

ditions, these men were obliged in all honor to accept the philosophy they set out to demolish.

Alfred Wallace is to-day an avowed spiritist, and Sir Oliver Lodge, before a great and august body of scientists, recently declared, "My brothers, I KNOW the dead live. I have seen and talked with them."

Is it strange then that there are four hundred thousand avowed spiritualists in America today and ten times as many more who have accepted what Spiritualism has to teach? Why should the Church fail to recognize this most important phase of sacred teaching?

In "New Thought" we also trace a distinct and intelligent protest against the dismal preachments of the narrow past regarding the nature of man. We have been told that human nature is full of darkness, that man was "conceived in sin and born in iniquity"; that his human nature is evil and earthy and that by no means could he ever become spiritual, pure or godly except through belief in the mission of Jesus Christ.

New Thought writers assert that man is not inherently bad or depraved, but is essentially and positively divine; that he does not attain to divinity by any chance mental operations, but is, was and ever has been a part of One Imperishable Existence who knows neither beginning nor end; that within each is a God of Light slumbering in the matrix of matter; that all we need do is to awaken that sleeping God, and be-

hold the Kingdom is found, and with it all of the abundance of power, health, wealth, joy and success that are the everlasting concomitants of His glory.

This teaching is taken fresh from the lips of the Master and His disciples. When Christ was asked where the kingdom lay, He said, "It is within." This statement must have astounded the crude, earth-bound Syrians of that day, who thought the Kingdom was a glorious New Jerusalem away off in the skies, that shone with jewelled gates, streets of gold and alabaster and jasper walls. Of course they could not understand such a cryptic utterance, so they pondered dubiously over the puzzle until they evolved another question, "What is the Kingdom like unto?" He replied, "It is like unto a grain of mustard seed which a man took, and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

The amazement of the multitudes grew and He spake again, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." The last parable is most significant to a student of higher thought. In this simile the Master gives the key to His meaning. The three measures of meal are the three bodies of the personality which each man wears

—the physical body of action; the astral or feeling body of desire; the mental or cognitional body of thought. The leaven is the Christ indwelling, which is within, the Kingdom of light and power and glory. The process of growth in evolution involves the slow leavening of these three garments with the effluence of the Christ nature; a gradual lifting through the yeast of aspiration until they are transmuted, resurrected and glorified by the Spirit.

Christ recognized that this Spirit within was common to all and the source of all life and abundance. He said, "Of myself I can do nothing. The Father in me, He doeth the works."

The apostles referred to the Kingdom as synonymous with God in the soul. St. Paul told his beloved of, "Christ in you the hope of glory," not Christ outside or in Heaven on the right hand of the Father, but WITHIN. "Ye are the temples of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you." "Ye are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

It is obvious, therefore, that New Thought, in its fundamentals at least, is declaratory of one of the Master's most insistent and mystical teachings. The neglect of this one teaching alone is so serious that Christianity cannot survive its loss. The concept of our own inherent divinity is all important. If Christianity ever regains a permanent and enduring hold on the American mind, it will be through this teaching,

which is to-day making so powerful an appeal to the bold, aspiring and dominant minds of our people.

And why is Theosophy? Theosophy exists because it has food and drink in abundance for all, and the world is ahunger and athirst. It is almost blasphemous to assert that the people of our country are naturally irreligious and depraved, that they are so absorbed in their own gains and pleasures that they have no place for Christ and Christianity. The one hundred millions of America want a religion that warms and refines the heart and at the same time does no violence to reason. They want, in very fact, the Christ, but they want that Christ unchurched, unshackled and unconfined; an eternal symbol of the Christ Child within their own hearts. And they have that right, for Christ belongs to no church, to no people, but to all.

CHAPTER II.

Secret Teachings

SERIOUS and lamentable as these omissions from the church teaching may appear, there is yet another fault in modern ministry that in time would destroy the strongest church. We refer to the loss of the mystic side of Christianity and the pathetic efforts of the clergy to nourish all their followers on the purely exoteric and historic truths. In cruder words, we are all fed out of the same spoon. The ministers say there is but one truth that all need accept, and once accepted we have salvation and attainment forevermore. Just one or two simple truths and we are in the Kingdom forever. If an Emerson, with his superman consciousness, his royal love of his fellows, the profound and mystical learning so gracefully embodied there, if Emerson went to church and sat on the front row and beside him sat a low-browed, ignorant, unlettered Hottentot, both would receive the same spiritual pabulum. No church can survive such a system of teaching. The instruction must be gathered to meet the intelligence and unfoldment of each. There is milk for the sucklings in Christianity, but there is also "strong meat for strong men." The trouble is that we are trying to feed the strong men on the suckling's milk and they are not nourished. Soon they

starve and begin to search elsewhere for food to sustain the spiritual life.

Every religion has its mystery side, that part which is veiled from the multitude because the pure, rich truth that it contains is too strong, too elevated and illuminating for the babes to receive. It is this mystic side that Christianity has lost. The early Church had not lost it; there were many mystics and followers of the hidden side in the early days and some of these wrote about the, "Mysteries of God hidden in a Symbol." If we read the works of St. Clement and Origen, two of the most illustrious of these early Christian Fathers, we are struck with the depth and profundity of the teachings attributed to Jesus. We find them not at all simple, but deeply occult and mystical. Origen says that the teachings Christ gave to His disciples "in the house," or in places apart, formed an important part of the treasures of the Church.

That such teaching was given is amply illustrated in the narrative of Christ's ministry. "And when they were alone those that were about him asked of him a parable, and He said, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to all them that are without, these things are done in parable.'"

"Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."

It was prophesied in the Old Testament that Jesus would "utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." It is apparent that He fulfilled that prophecy and freely told His disciples in places apart the deep things of God, the mysteries of the Kingdom; but not all the mysteries, for later we hear Him say to the apostles, on the eve of His death, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." How significant is this remark when we remember that for nearly three years these men had been communing with Him, had sat at His feet, basking in the radiance of that great aura, had shared in the mighty stimulus of His presence, were members of His church, little children in Christ, and yet they were unable to receive what He had to tell them. Does this not give us a hint of the mystic depths in the teachings He came to give? What glimpses of unimaginable splendor could have been revealed, we can only conjecture; but surely these facts put at rest the assumption that He came only to teach a scheme of post-mortem salvation. Religion is something more than a teaching about life after death. This is really its least important aspect. A soul conscious of himself and His own Christ center, sees in death only a new phase of life and progression. It is a part of a continuous program of change presaging the return

of the soul into new garments of flesh. He does not go far off into heaven or hell there to remain forever in joy or torment, but continues onward and upward into new and broader phases of consciousness. Religion is, in fact, the Science of Self Expression. The great teachers who, from time to time, come as prophets and saviors to the world, explain as best they may to our darkened minds the factors in human growth. They teach us the laws of the higher life in a manner and to a degree that is understandable. Religion and revealed teaching concern our relation to God, to our fellows, to the lower kingdoms; they teach of the origin and development of our universe, the plan God has for us, and of the measureless potencies locked up within each human heart. When man knows himself, he knows all things, for in him is mirrored the universe. He can say, "I have the key to heaven and to hell." It is therefore plain that a great part of the deeper truths of Christianity is not found in the scriptural narratives, but lies underneath, and must be read with the seeing eye. These teachings given to the disciples are a part of a great body of occult facts that are now given freely through the Theosophical Society. Though lost to the Church, they may be found in all purity in the Theosophical literature.

You ask, What are these truths so deep and ennobling, that the Church has forgotten? We reply

that they concern all of the creeds of the Church and form the luminous background for these teachings. We may briefly illustrate by reference to prayer. Most of us, educated along practical lines and trained to believe in the universe as an orderly and progressive expression of a perfect will, who believe that the ruling intelligence of that universe is boundlessly sure of Himself and His processes, that He is not experimenting with humanity, but on the contrary takes each new step in human evolution with absolute certainty; those who have been thus taught, find in "prayer" a singularly baffling problem. Does God alter His great cosmic plan every time He answers a prayer? Why should He make a plan and then incessantly change it to suit the little cells in His body that supplicate and clamor for things heretofore denied them? In every prayer, and by prayer I do not mean the deep meditation and communion with God that seeks only union in Him, or the petition for light and strength for high undertakings—such prayers of course answer themselves—but the prayer that asks for visible material relief; in every supplication of this kind the suppliant, in substance, cries: "Great Giver of all, I am in dire need of something which you overlooked in your endowment; you made all things good except my particular affairs, so please change the plan to include this thing for me." We pray to God to bless our murderous arms in battle, to sanctify our commercial under-

taking, to make the sun shine when the rain is falling, and to bring rain when the sky is clear. It is a curious implication of Divine incompetence for a man of faith, and yet the most astounding thing about it is that prayers of this kind are answered. A vast amount of credible evidence is available to show that prayers are answered. How can we explain it? Theosophy, from its storehouse of well-nigh inexhaustible facts, assures us that no miracle occurs when prayers are answered. Nor does God stoop down at each behest and alter His original purpose for that individual, but, on the contrary, the phenomenon of response occurs in obedience to the inflexible law of cause and effect.

When we lift our minds in earnest and concentrated desire for any object, we create in the invisible world of thought a whirling vortex. It matters not if we are petitioning to a higher power. A strong vibration of this kind acts on the plane where it is liberated, and the whirlpool of desire becomes an attractive center, a magnetic focus, tending to draw from all points of the compass the elements of fulfilment. All who pray earnestly and with faith shall receive. It may require time and patience, but the law will not be denied. Prayers indeed frequently answer themselves through the operation of this law of causation.

The early cave man worked strenuously with his fire stick while he prayed to the fire-god, but no one will doubt that the blaze came from the friction. Many

of our answered prayers would have been equally fruitful if we had sat in strong, silent, resolute communion with the God of our own soul. Not all prayers are answered in this fashion. There are truly angel hosts who minister to the Divine will, and within the scope of their power and authority may here and there pause and listen to souls on earth "who entreat and implore in the passion and fervor of prayer," and, moved to gentle pity, may bring to the suppliant answering relief, though, of course, the one who prays must have earned the right to such relief by obedience to law in the past.

We have, in the doctrine of forgiveness of sin, a striking illustration as well of the confusion of clear thought with dogmatic errors. That one may, during a long and evil life, bring pain and grief to thousands, and may by violence and wrong hold back the advancement of the whole human race, and yet that such a person may at the gateways of death repent and be absolved of his sin, and go pure, spotless and unencumbered into the Kingdom of Joy—this is a soul-darkening illusion and without scriptural foundation. This teaching has made a billion atheists, and does violence to reason and the sense of right.

"God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This scriptural statement is a complete expression of the law and is supplemented in detail by the Master's words, "For every idle word

that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." He did not say, good men, bad men, Christian, Jew or Roman, but MEN. It is certain that every act has a commensurate and adequate effect that cannot be negated by any state of mind or belief. Forgiveness of sin is in one sense, and to the degree taught by Christ, a reality. One who has done wrong may become genuinely sorry and through remorse and contrition become a finer, sweeter character. If his regret leads him into better ways, he has a sense of forgiveness, a clean, healthy, joyous sense of noble purpose and endeavor, for, as Maeterlinck says, "The acknowledgment of one's fault precipitates chemically their poison, which becomes innocent crystals in the bottom of memory." Our sins are overflowed, submerged, drowned in the new sense of truth, and the crystals at the bottom become the foundation of the mellow brew of sympathy and understanding. This forgiveness represents a new washed personality that has lost its unclean and corroding consciousness and is again in joyous and peaceful communion with the Christ within, who atones for sin. Were such a state not attainable, were forgiveness not a fact, our sins would soon overwhelm us, and such a sense of guilt and hopeless wickedness would envelop us that life would be vile and hateful, but happily sin ceaseth with sin. But does the fruit of sinning cease with the sin? Does the drunkard who reforms have a

perfect body again? Must he not, his life through, carry the sodden and stiffened body, the wracked and tortured nerves so long abused? If you take the life of another in a moment of passion, you may, by repentance and a life of virtue, gain forgiveness and complete freedom from the pangs of guilt, but what about the life you have taken? Will Nature demand no restitution? Has she been appeased? What about the law of perfect justice that brings to each his earnings? Where and when do we restore to Nature the life we have taken? Theosophy tells us that the law is gentle, but inexorable. We must pay the debt ourselves. None else may pay. Somewhere, sometime, we must meet the man whose life thread we severed, and by long service and meek tribute make faultless restitution. In this respect we must remember that this life is but a fragment of our destiny. We shall come again and again into manifestation, until we stand perfected in the image of God.

Theosophy throws a flood of light upon the sacraments of the Church. Those who are unsympathetic with the formalism of the ritualistic churches find little to admire in the sacraments. They regard them as ingenious sacredotal inventions designed to invest the church with a fascinating glamor of mystery. The incense, the sacred music, the sonorous chant, the gorgeous robes, the mysterious and intricate genuflections of the priest have to their minds almost sinister sig-

nificance because they view them as suppressive and dangerous superstitions. To the sympathetic and understanding, the sacraments are full of vivid interest and inspiration. When seen from the inner side, the sacraments are observed to be, not mere entertainments, or sensuous appeals to the imagination, but powerful and effective agencies for the distribution of spiritual life. In the Mass, when the incense has purified the atmosphere of the church and the music has harmonized the minds and hearts of the congregation, the officiant, properly vested, enters the sanctuary and places the sacred vessels on the altar. Then begins a significant, synoptic drama of the life story of Jesus and much more which we may not at this time discuss. From the moment the priest enters the sanctuary, to the Benediction and the Last Gospel, we have the steady and consistent development of a potent occult medium.

When the priest utters the Word of Power and makes the Sign of Power, certain distinct and observable changes occur in the matter of the invisible worlds. The vibrations set in motion actually create an impalpable form through which the spiritual forces from the higher realms may flow down into the physical plane. These forces play out in palpitating waves or in steady radiations through the congregation and a profound spiritual consciousness is felt. A sense of peace and wellbeing would represent the average re-

action to this remarkable ceremony. The congregation, after the Mass, go away nourished and uplifted. They have not asked for bread and received a stone, but have really received the Bread of Life. This is one reason why the ritualistic churches retain their wonderful vitality. The protestant churches, at the Reformation, renounced most of the sacraments and thereby put away the greatest means of grace. These are not sentimentalities, but chill and certain facts.

With great reverence and with equal confidence we approach the doctrine of the Vicarious Atonement. One who has not studied the development of the Church during the first six centuries A. D. can form no adequate idea of the modifications this doctrine has undergone or how totally the modern teaching is at variance with the real teaching of the Christ. It will perhaps not be irreverent to say, without emphasis or prolonged discussion, that the accepted idea that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was sent to the world to ransom and redeem humanity from its sin and guilt and for that purpose died on the cross that all who believe on Him might be saved, is not, in truth, a clear or accurate representation of what He came to teach It is rather an outgrowth and development of the old tribal traditions of the Jews where God is depicted as an angry and avenging deity who requires constantly to be placated and appeased by sacrifices and blood offerings. When a tribe or nation desired to undertake

an expedition or engage in war they offered the slain bodies of countless animals on the altar of their God as a bribe for his favor. We find in the modern church teaching, until quite recently, the same old concept, that God was angry with the world, but His wrath was appeased and extinguished when His only begotten and beloved Son was slain on the cross in atonement for the sins of men.

We see in Christ's ministry a wholly different purpose. He came to save men, truly. He came not to save them from God, but from themselves. Man is his own lawgiver. Within the sanctuary of the soul is the Supreme Court, prosecution, defense and jury. From the ruling of that court there is no appeal. Christ came to save us from the sin of selfishness. He told us to give up and enter the Kingdom. Christ was the first born of many brethren, the first of our restless, striving humanity to gain the goal; the first to finish in the evolutionary race. He was not the only begotten, but the first begotten Son of God, because He was the first to attain to the union with God which gave Him Son-ship in the fullest sense. He had trodden the long path we are treading and had found His way back home, a glorified Son of the Father. He did not intend that He should be considered a unique expression of the Deity, a miraculously created being who should ever sit in grandeur on the right hand of the Father, judging the living and the dead.

He is our loving Elder Brother. He came to us at a time when the world was filled with blood-lust and human slavery, came in a human body in a human way, filled with human love and human purposes. He was divine truly, for the Father dwelt within Him and He dwelt in the Father, which is another way of saying that God dwells in the hidden temple. "Ye are the temples of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you." But Christ did not think of Himself as unique in His divinity. The miracles He performed were done by the Father within. "Of myself I can do nothing. The Father in me, He doeth the works." That same Father dwelt in others, and He recognized the fact and saw instinctively in every man the impress and image of divinity. This is why he consorted with sinners and loved them. He saw behind the walls of flesh, beyond the accidents of birth to that germ of immortality and omnipotence that would unfold forever and ever. He loved men because He saw in them the seeds of His own greatness. "The things I do ye shall do and more." The at-one-ment with all of humanity He expressed in His life and perpetuated in His death. This is the true meaning of the at-one-ment. We are in a perpetual and unfailing alliance with Him, which the passage of centuries serves only to further cement and ripen. We may magnify our own depravity and exalt His transcendent greatness if we will, but we cannot lessen His royal faith in us.

"Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," he entreated. Why should He enjoin us to become as perfect as the One guiding power and mind of the Universe who creates and holds in place with His granite will the wheeling stars and planets in space, unless He saw in us the irrefutable genius of the Lord of all. He did not mean, of course, that we should expect such boundless attainment in a single life, nor did He expect us to unfold it in Heaven, for Heaven is a place of rest. He implied that we should express that perfection by steady spiritual growth through the ages. All things lie in the Kingdom and the Kingdom is within. When we consider, therefore, that we have all the abysses of time to roam in, we know that this ideal of God-perfection is a reachable ideal. Truly, if we had only this one life to live, perfection and its immunity from sorrow and failure would be a dream and a delusion and His words but flowers of speech. Happily we know that we come again to this earth, for "Nature is waiting with eager expectation the appearing of the Sons of God," the apostle tells us, and the Sons of God are taught through experience in earth life. One life is a day at school. We come again tomorrow and yet again. The slow growth of the Sons of God through the years is beautifully illustrated in an allegory written long ago by Berry Benson:

"A boy went to school. He was very little. All that he knew he had drawn in with his mother's milk. His teacher (who was God) placed him in the lowest class, and gave him these lessons to learn: Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt do no hurt to any living thing. Thou shalt not steal. So the man did not kill; but he was cruel, and he stole. At the end of the day (when his beard was gray—when the night was come), his teacher (who was God) said: Thou hast learned not to kill. But the other lessons thou has not learned. Come back tomorrow.

"On the morrow he came back, a little boy. And his teacher (who was God) put him in a class a little higher, and gave him these lessons to learn: Thou shalt do no hurt to any living thing. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not cheat. So the man did no hurt to any living thing; but he stole, and he cheated. And at the end of the day (when his beard was gray—when the night was come), his teacher (who was God) said: Thou hast learned to be merciful. But the other lessons thou hast not learned. Come back tomorrow.

"Again, on the morrow, he came back, a little boy. And his teacher (who was God) put him in a class yet a little higher, and gave him these lessons to learn: Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not cheat. Thou shalt not covet. So the man did not steal; but he cheated, and he coveted. And at the end of the day (when his beard was gray—when the night was come), his teacher (who was God) said: Thou hast learned not to steal. But the other lessons thou hast not learned. Come back, my child, tomorrow.

"This is what I have read in the faces of men and women, in the book of the world, and in the scroll of the heavens, which is writ with stars."

This idea of Reincarnation is as yet much a mystery to the Western world though it is one of the oldest ideas of immortality, and more than one-third of the human race to-day accept it. It is because of its mystery and depth perhaps that Christ spoke of it only to His disciples, and He was not certain that they could receive it, for when His disciples sought to know whether John the Baptist was a true prophet, when they had been expecting Elias, Jesus said: "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The return of the soul of Elias into a new body and frame, called John the Baptist, is but an instance of a process that is incessantly occurring in the human race. It is but a symbol of that recurring night and day in the manifestation of your soul and mine.

CHAPTER III.

Our Hope

THE restoration of these benign truths to Christianity will mark a world-wide religious revival. Without them, church attendance will steadily decline. Quite recently the writer spoke before the inmates of a Western penitentiary. Several hundred men listened with breathless interest to the mystic side of Christianity. Their interest was keen and appreciative, and except for a certain slowness of apprehension, this audience was equal in readiness to receive to any I have addressed outside of prison walls. It is a mistake to assume that men in jail are different from ourselves. Aside from the fact that they have been caught, they are quite like the rest of us. Of all the teaching of Esoteric Christianity that they heard, none made so powerful an impression as the teaching that "Christ within is the hope of glory." Those with whom I talked after the lecture very frankly confessed that they were eager to understand and receive spiritual teaching, but that they were unable to understand the scheme of salvation outlined by Christianity. They could understand the possibility of salvation from within, through the Christ nature latent there, which slowly and patiently leavened the lower nature until the whole was lifted into a glorious immortality, but

salvation through the saving grace outside was difficult to understand. A bold, eager soul who has strayed from the path of virtue does not wish to be led like a wayward child back onto the highway. He wishes to seek and find the highroad himself, for in that search, endurance, tension of mind, courage and wisdom are found. I was told, by a devoted friend of the prison boys, a significant story indicative of the trend of the prisoner's thought. At this prison each week a minister spoke on some phase of Christianity. At last some of the long timers went to the warden and asked if they might paint a sign to hang up on the platform in the lecture hall, for each minister, who came, to read. The warden consented and the next minister who spoke was greeted by a large placard upon which appeared in bold letters the words: "For God's sake don't tell us the parable of the prodigal son."

The world is awearied and distracted with vain efforts to believe the unbelievable. We recently heard a minister speak to a great audience of college students. He said, among other things, "that human nature was bad and depraved; conceived in sin and born in iniquity. We never can hope to rise above our degradation except through belief on the mission and salvatory power of Jesus Christ." What a minister may hope to gain by such preachments we are at a loss to understand, but we are sure that the doc-

trine of essential sin and depravity is not a blessing to the world, but an unmitigated curse. To think evil is to be evil. We become like that upon which we brood. One who starts out in life with a sense of guilt and sin must be a hero to rise above that handicap. If you have a child, would you rather he think of himself as an angel or a devil? To the man of vision the question answers itself. A child who thinks of himself as an angel will become an angel; he is constantly creating thoughts and symbols of purity and beauty. These become actual presiding entities in his atmosphere, and they act and react upon him, moulding and modifying his character. Thoughts are things. Starting out in life with a bad image is like starting on a race with feet chained to the starting post.

If you have a friend who is traveling away from the path of truth and is sinking into morasses of sense and wantonness, you have a duty to perform, a solemn and sacred duty. You are to picture him as a shining and glorious statue of light, glowing and radiating at the center with purity and power. You are not lying to yourself when you imagine him thus, for every man is at the centre a shining God of light, a potential Christ glowing with hidden fires of virtue. Do this for your friend, holding him in confidence and sublime trust in that Self within, which is the all of him. His body is but the garment he wears. If you focus on that, seeing in it the plague spots of sin, you will drag

him down to lower depths through the psychology of your own thought.

We may all feel encouraged by the growth of liberality in the Church. Never before was there such a loosening of the shackles of prejudice and bigotry. A few weeks ago a heart-broken mother in British Columbia wrote to her pastor that her only son had been blown to atoms in the trenches in France. He had never been baptized, had not accepted Christ. Was his soul lost? There can be but one answer to this question from the viewpoint of the orthodox teaching. The soul of this boy is doomed. But the minister promptly answered, "No," repudiating with painless promptitude the old doctrine of damnation. And not only this, but the same question submitted to the other half-dozen ministers in the city brought the same heretical response. This is most encouraging, for it suggests to us the time when the clergy will repudiate the whole concept of damnation and eternal punishment and substitute therefore the idea of universal salvation and punishment adequate and commensurate with the offense committed.

A large church in the West has established a healing group where church members may, through study and meditation, attain to that invincible faith in the power of all true believers to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out devils."

The Stoneman Fellowship, an organization of

churchmen recently founded by Dr. H. C. Stone of Philadelphia, has gained tremendous impetus in eighteen months because it discards the encumbering creeds and offers a basis of Christian unity on the fundamental of brotherhood.

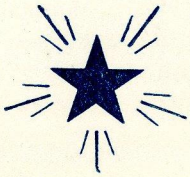
The Old Catholic movement recently inaugurated in England and Holland, affords an opportunity for those who have outgrown the crude formalism, unvivified by the mystical life, to come together for collective worship free from the domination of papacy or ecclesiastical authority of any kind. This order retains the magnificent ritual of the Catholic Church, but discards utterly the Roman Catholic traditions and its blind obedience to papal authority.

These movements, and many others, are vital and living testimonials to the new age of religious liberty that lies before us.

It may be, too, that His promise made so long ago that He would come again, is about to be fulfilled. When we gaze across the world and see the tremendous upheavals in progress with class arrayed against class, nation against nation, and even sex against sex, we wonder if these terrific contests are not a part of the plan for the augmentation of the new era. We wonder if it is not the clearing of the stage for a new world drama in which Christ will play the leading role. With the cessation of the great European war the world will face a social and economic crisis of the

first magnitude. We shall then need wise leadership as never before, for in that period we must undergo a social reconstruction that will shake the world to its foundation. A great genius will be needed to lead us in that hour, not a lawyer, statesman, soldier or savant, but a sagacious spiritual guide who can turn us from paths of destruction into paths of peace, who can set the keynote for the new civilization and inaugurate the essentials of a world state.

If He comes again, He will restate in new and modern terms the age-old religious truths, the truths about God and man, spiritual verities that may be received by white, black, brown and yellow men; a world religion truly that shall be but a re-proclamation of the essentials of Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism and the other great religions of the past. And best of all He will bring to us the inspiration of His own Divine personality, the healing touch of those strong hands of fellowship, and will say as He did before, "Love ye one another even as I have loved you."



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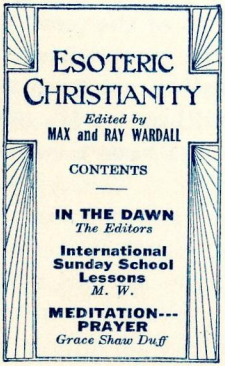
ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY

Edited by
MAX and RAY WARDALL

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MEDITATION--- PRAYER
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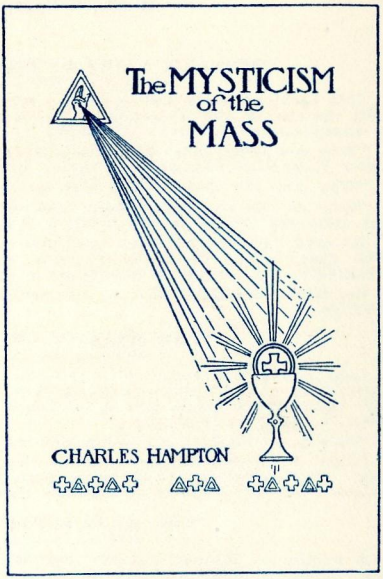

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